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ABSTRACT

Ontogenetic personality changes during adulthood were evaluated using the Inventory of Psychosocial Development (IPD) to yield scores corresponding to the first six stages of Erikson's developmental theory. Of the 166 males and 161 females whose undergraduate data from 1966 were available, 76 males and 71 females returned usable data. Analyses of variance corresponding to longitudinal, cross-sectional, and time-lag comparisons were conducted on composite scores by sex and the IPD scale. Results indicated that ontogenetic change occurred for the male alumni, while results for females were due to socio-cultural changes. (Author/HLM)

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Psychosocial Development during Adulthood:

Age and Cohort Comparisons

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Paper presented at 86th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, August 1978

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Research on personality development during the adult years has called into question Erikson's assumption of ontogenetic changes in psychosocial functioning throughout the life span. However, the personality measures used in such research have generally been based upon trait theories and hence may not have been sensitive to developmental changes. In the present study, the Inventory of Psychosocial Development, which yields scores corresponding to the first six stages of Erikson's theory was used as a more direct means of evaluating ontogenetic personality change during adulthood.

The design consisted of a 10-year follow-up of Constantinople's (1969) original sample and a simultaneous testing of current undergraduates attending the same private university. This design, similar to that employed by Woodruff and Birren (1972) permits longitudinal, cross-sectional, and time-lag comparisons. Although not meeting the criteria for a full sequential analysis, evidence bearing on the relative effects of age versus cohort and time of testing effects could be inferred. It was hypothesized that ontogenetic change would occur for overall psychosocial development, and further, that such change would be greatest for Stages 5 and 6.

Of the 166 males and 161 females whose undergraduate data from 1966 were available, useable data were returned from 76 males and 71 females. Preliminary analyses revealed that their 1966 scores were comparable to those who were not followed. The 1976 sample of undergraduates included 107 males and 117 females.

Three analyses of variance corresponding to longitudinal, cross-sectional, and time-lag comparisons were conducted on composite (positive minus negative subscale) scores by sex and psychosocial development scale. Class was included

as a variable in the longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses.

There were significant increases in overall scores on the longitudinal analysis, significantly higher scores for alumni on the cross-sectional, and an interaction of Cohort/Time of testing X Sex on the time-lag. Given the limitations of the present design, it was inferred that ontogenetic change appeared to occur for the male alumni while the results for females could be attributed to socio-cultural changes. Moreover, the greatest ontogenetic effect appeared on Stage 4, suggesting that orientation to the work ethic may be of particular concern during this portion of the adult years.

Table 2

Distributions of Samples by Class and Sex

Sample	Sophomores		Juniors		Seniors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
College 1966/Alumni 1976	30	30	21	16	25	25
College 1976	44	44	40	31	23	42

Table 3

Significant Main Effects and Interactions

Analysis	Source[a]	df	F	p
Longitudinal	Age/Time of testing	1,141	24.77	.0001
	Age/Time of testing X Scale	1,141	35.97	.001
Cross-Sectional	Age/Cohort	1.367	10.58	.001
	Age/Cohort X Scale	1,367	13.90	.001
Time-Lag	Cohort/Time of testing X Scale	1,359	3.59	.047
	Cohort/Time of testing X Sex	1,359	4.96	.03
	Cohort/Time of testing X Sex X Class	2,359	3.24	.04

[a]Main effects of comparison defined in terms of confounded effects.

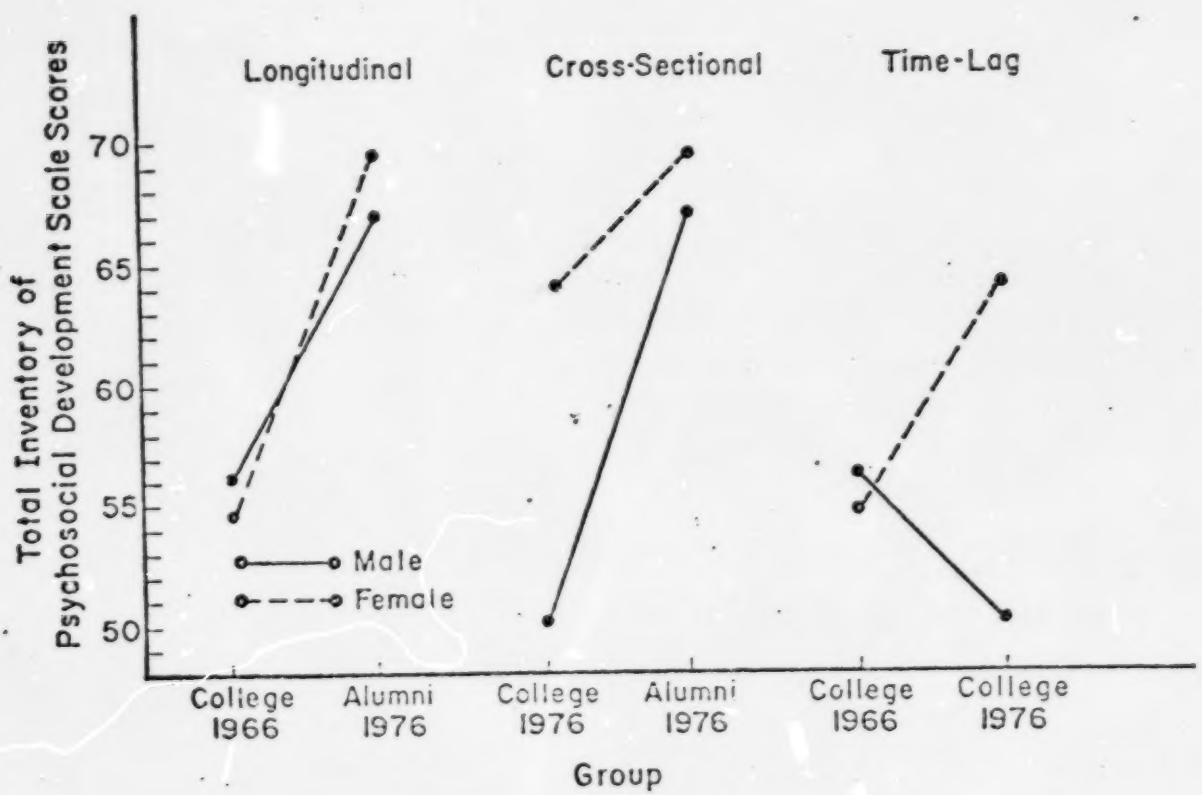

Figure 1. Mean Overall Inventory of Psychosocial Development Scores used in the Longitudinal, Cross-Sectional, and Time-Lag Analyses.